



The History of Mission to Seafarers



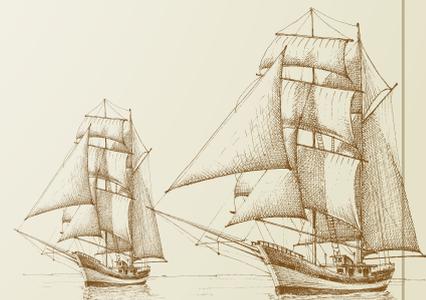
The history of The Mission to Seafarers dates back to early in the 19th century. In 1835 a young Anglican clergyman, John Ashley, was on holiday at Clevedon, near Bristol, before taking up a parish appointment. One afternoon he was walking along the cliffs with his young child. Looking out at the lonely islands of Steep Holm and Flat Holm which lie in the Bristol Channel, the child asked John Ashley how the islanders were able to go to church. Impelled by curiosity Ashley went to visit the fishermen and farmers found a warm welcome. For the next three months he regularly visited them.

On his farewell visit Ashley asked a fisherman about a large fleet of sailing ships waiting in nearby Penarth Roads, awaiting a favourable wind. When he was told that no clergyman had ever visited them, he decided to go on board at least some of the ships. Next day he hired a boat and set sail for the fleet. As a result, Ashley decided to turn down his parish appointment and, instead, to carry on a ministry among seamen.

In 1837, on the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury, he founded the Bristol Channel Mission, renamed the Bristol Channel Seamen's Mission in 1845. Ashley became the first chaplain.

The "Eirene"

Drawing on the income from a family plantation in the West Indies, he built the "Eirene", a powerful cutter which he fitted with a chapel below decks. Sadly, the strain of life constantly afloat in cramped conditions began to affect Ashley's health and in 1850 he was forced to retire. By then what is now known as The Mission to Seafarers was born.



In 1858, the Missions' flying angel logo was adopted through inspiration by a verse from the Book of Revelation: "Then I saw an angel flying in mid-heaven with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those on earth, to every nation and tribe, language and people."

For more than 150 years The Mission to Seafarers has brought compassion and care to seafarers in desperate need around the world.



The Missions to Seamen

John Ashley's work soon inspired Anglican ministries in other ports, and it was decided in 1856 that there should be one organisation to co-ordinate and expand this service to seafarers, called The Missions to Seamen. This became The Mission to Seafarers in 2000, to reflect its role as a society which cares for all seafarers, regardless of rank, gender, nationality or faith.

The Flying Angel

The MtS adopted the image of the angel in 1856, and today the Flying Angel logo is recognised by seafarers around the world as a sign of care, support and friendship.

*To find out more about the Mission's history, you can read *The Flying Angel Story* in the interactive reader.*

